

The MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY

By Harold MacGrath

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"The Million Dollar Mystery" will run for twenty-two consecutive weeks in this paper. By an arrangement with the Thanousser Film Company it has been made possible not only to read the story in this paper but also to see it each week in the various moving picture theatres. For the solution of this mystery story \$10,000 will be given.

Conditions Governing the Contest. The prize of \$10,000 will be won by the man, woman or child who writes the most acceptable solution of the mystery, from which the last two reels of the motion picture drama will be made and the last two chapters of the story written by Harold MacGrath.

Solutions may be sent to the Thanousser Film Corporation, either at Chicago or New York, any time up to midnight, Dec. 14. They must bear postoffice marks not later than that date. This allows four weeks after the first appearance of the last film release and three weeks after the last chapter is published in the paper in which to submit the solutions.

A board of three judges will determine which of the many solutions received is the most acceptable. The judgment of this board will be absolute and final. Nothing of a literary nature will be considered in the decision, nor given any preference in the selection of the winner of the \$10,000 prize. The last two reels, which will give the most acceptable solution to the mystery, will be presented in the theatres having this feature as soon as it is possible to produce the same. The story corresponding to these motion pictures will appear in the newspapers coincidentally, or as soon after the appearance of the pictures as practicable. With the last two reels will be shown the picture of the winner, his or her home, and other interesting features. It is understood that the newspapers, so far as practicable, in printing the last two chapters of the story by Harold MacGrath, will also show a picture of the successful contestant.

Solutions to the mystery must not be more than 100 words long. Here are some questions to be kept in mind in connection with the mystery as an aid to a solution:

- No. 1—What becomes of the millionaire?
- No. 2—What becomes of the \$10,000,000?
- No. 3—Whom does Florence marry?
- No. 4—What does become of the Russian countess?

Nobody connected either directly or indirectly with "The Million Dollar Mystery" will be considered as a contestant.

Synopsis of Previous Chapters. Stanley Hargreave, millionaire, after a miraculous escape from the den of the gang of brilliant thieves known as the Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargreave one night enters a Broadway restaurant and there comes face to face with the gang's leader, Braine.

After the meeting, during which Braine apparently recognizes the officer, Hargreave hurries to his magnificent Riverside home and lays plans for making his escape from the country. He writes a letter to the girls' school in New Jersey where 18 years before he had mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Gray. He also pays a visit to the hangar of a daredevil aviator.

Braine and members of his band returned to Hargreave's home at night, but as they enter the house the watchers outside see a balloon leave the roof. The safe is found empty—the million which Hargreave was known to have drawn that day was gone. Then some one announced the balloon had been punctured and dropped into the sea.

Florence arrives from the girls' school, Princess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims to be a relative. Two bogus detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man.

By bribing the captain of the Orient Norton lays a trap for Braine and his gang. Princess Olga also visits the Orient's captain and she easily falls into the reporter's snare. The plan proves abortive through Braine's good luck and only briefings fall into the hands of the police.

Later, Florence is lured from home by the band, but succeeds in freeing herself from their clutches. The next day Jones removes a box from his hiding place and, pursued by Braine's men, rushes to the water front. A race in motor boats ensues. Jones drops the box into the sea and with his automatic sets fire to the pursuing boat.

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more than a pint of wine or smoke more than two cigars in an evening? Poor fools! What! let my brain go into the wastebasket for the sake of an hour or so of exhilaration? No, and never will I. I'm keen about the gray matter I've got, and by the Lord Harry, I'm going to keep it. There's only one dope fiend in the Hundred, and he's one of the best decoys we have; so let him have his coke whenever he really needs it. But this man Felton has seen my face. Some day he'll see it again, ask questions, and then—

"Then what?"
"A burial at sea," he laughed. The laughter died swiftly as it came. "Throw it into eight hundred feet of water, on a bar where the sands are always shifting. He'll never find it, even if he took the range. He could not have got a decent one. The sun was dropping and the shadows were long. He threw the chest into the water and then began peeing away at us, cool as you please, and fired our tank."

"It looks to me as if he had wasted his time."
"That depends. Between you and me and the gate post, I've a sneaking idea that this man Jones, whom nobody has given any particular attention, is a deep, clever man. He may have been honestly attempting to find a new hiding place; the advertisement in the newspaper may have drawn him. He may have thrown the box in pure rage at seeing himself checkmated. Again, the whole thing may have been worked up for our benefit, a blind. But if that's the case, Jones has us on the hip, for we can't tell. But we can do what in all probability he expects we'll cease to do—watch him just as shrewdly as before."

Olga caught his hand and drew him down beside her. "I wasn't going to bother you tonight, but it may mean something vital."
"For reply she rose and walked over to the light button. She pressed it and the apartment became dark. "Come over to the window, quick!" She dragged him across the room. "Over the way, the house with the marble front."

A man emerged, lit a cigarette and walked leisurely down the street.
"No," she cried, as Braine turned to make for the door, doubtless with the intention of finding out who this man was. "Every night after you leave no appears."
"Does he follow me?"
"No. And that's what bothered me at first. I believed he was watching some apartment above. But regularly when I turn out the lights he comes forth. So there's no doubt that he watches you enter and takes note of your departure."

"But doesn't follow me. That's odd. What the devil is his idea?"
"I'd give a good deal to learn."
The shadow and the glowing cigarette disappeared around the corner, and the lights in the apartment were turned on again.

"He's gone. You really think he's watching me?"
"He's watching this apartment, the watcher was watching from his vantage behind the corner."
"Suspicious!" he murmured, tossing the cigarette into the gutter. It's a watching me for a change. I'll drop out. I know what I know. It's a great world. It's fine to be alive and kicking on top of it." He went on without a word and took the subway train for downtown.

"Is there any way I could get near him?" asked Braine.
"Tomorrow night you might leave by the janitor's entrance. I'll keep the lights on till you're outside. Then I'll turn them off and you can follow and learn who he is."
"It's mighty important."
"Don't scowl. At your age a wrinkle is apt to remain if you once get it started."

"May I smoke?"
He laughed. "Wrinkles!" She could talk of wrinkles!
"They are more important than you think. Every morning I rub out the wrinkle I go to bed with."
"I wish you could rub out the general stupidity which is wrinkling my brain. I've made three moves and failed in each. What's come over me?"

"Perhaps you've had too many successes. The wheel of chance is always turning around."
"May I smoke?"
"Thanks. At least it proves you still have some consideration for me. You would smoke whether it was agreeable or not. But I like the odor of a good cigar. And it always helps you to think."

Braine lit the Olga and began his customary paucity. At length he paused.
"Suppose we have a real old-fashioned coaching party out to the old mansion we know about?"
"And what shall we do there?"
"Make the mansion one of our castles where some of our people enter can't get out. Do you think you could get her to go?"
"I can try."

"Olga, I must have that girl; and I must have her room. Sometimes I find myself mightily puzzled over the whole thing. If Hargreave is alive, why doesn't he turn up now that it's practically known that his daughter presides over his household? I might understand it if I didn't know that Hargreave is really afraid of nothing. Where is the man with the five thousand, picked up at sea? What was the reason for Jones' carrying that box out in the broad daylight? Who is the chap watching across the street? Sometimes I believe in my soul—if I have one!—that Hargreave is playing with us, playing! Well, I'm going to the hall consumed cigar into the grate. The black hundred always goes forward, win or lose, and never

forgets."
"We are a fine pair!" said the woman bitterly.
"We are exactly what fate intended us to be. They wrote you down in the book as a beautiful body with a crooked mind. They wrote me over as the devil, doomed to roam cart-top till I'm killed."
"Killed?"
"Why, yes. I'm not the kind of chap who dies in bed, surrounded by the weeping members of the family, doctor, nurse, and priest. I'm a scoundrel; but it has this saying grace, I enjoy being a scoundrel. Now, I'm going up to the club. There's nothing like a game of billiards or chess to smooth that wrinkle which seems to worry you."

In the great newspaper office there was mighty racket. Midnight always means pandemonium in the city room of a metropolitan daily. Copy boys are rushing to and fro, messengers and printers with sticky galley in their hands; reporters were banging away at their typewriters, and interminglingly, you could hear the ceaseless clackety-clack from the telegraph room.

The managing editor came out of his office and approached the desk of the night city editor.
"Editorial page gone down?"
"Twenty minutes ago," said the night city editor.
"I wanted a stick on that Panama rumpus."
"Too late."
"Where's Jim Norton?"
"At the chamber of commerce banquet. The major is going to throw a bomb into the enemy's camp."
"Nothing on the Hargreave stuff?"
"No. Guess I'd better put that in the caddy-hole. He's dead."
"No will found yet?"
"Not a piece as big as a postage stamp."

"That will leave the girl in a tough place. No will, no birth certificate, and worst of all, no photograph of the old man himself. I don't see why Jim sidestepped this affair. He is the only man in town who knew anything about Hargreave."
"He hasn't given it up; but he wants to cover it on his own, turn the yarn around when he's got it, no false alarm."
"Ah! So that's the game?"
"Yes; and Jim is the sort every paper needs. When the time comes the story turns up. If there is one. Here he is now. Looks like an actor in the fourth act of a drama. Good looking chap, though."

Norton came in through the outer gates. He was in evening clothes, top hat. A dead cigarette dangling between his lips.
"How much do you want?" asked the night city editor.
"Column and a half."
"Off with your glad rags!"
"Anything good?" asked the managing editor.
"The lid has been jammed on tight. No wine in any restaurant after 1 o'clock. They'll be a roundup of every gunman in town."
"Good work! Go to it."
It was 1 o'clock when Norton turned in his last sheet of copy and started home. Just outside the entrance to the building a man with a slouch hat drawn down over him eyes stepped forward.
"Mr. Norton?"
"Yes," Norton stepped back suspiciously. The other chuckled, raised and lowered his hat swiftly.
"Good Lord!" murmured the reporter.
"Will you take a ride with me in a taxi?"
"All the way to Syracuse, if you say so. Well, I'll tink damn!"
"No names please!"
"What took place in that taxicab was never generally known. But at 10 o'clock the next morning Norton surprised the elevator boy by going down. Norton proceeded down to the National bank, where he deposited \$5,000 in bills of large denominations. The teller had some difficulty in counting them. They stuck together and retained the sudden appearance of money recently submerged in water.

Florence was delighted at the idea of a coaching party. Often during her school girl days she had seen the fashionable coaches go careening along the road, with the sharp, clear notes of a bugle rising above the thunder of hoofs and the clatter of wheels. Jones was not enthusiastic; neither was he a killjoy.
"But you are to go along, too," said Florence.
"I, Miss Florence?"
"The countess invited you especially. You will go with a hamper."
"Ah, in my capacity as butler; very good, Miss Florence." To her he gave no sign of his secret satisfaction.

The hour arrived, and the gay party bowled away. They wound in and out of the streets toward the country to the crack of the whip and the blare of the horn. Florence's enjoyment would have been perfect had it not been for the absence of Norton. Why hadn't he been invited? She did not ask because she did not care to disclose to the countess her interest in the reporter. They were nearing the limits of the city, when the coach was forced to take a sharp turn to avoid an automobile in trouble. The man putting up at the engine raised his head. It was Norton, and Florence waved her hand vigorously.
"A coaching party," he murmured.
"And your niece, James was not invited? O, very well." He laughed, and suddenly grew serious. It would not hurt to find out where the coach was going.

He set to work bravely, located the trouble, righted it, and set off for the Hargreave home. He found Susan and bombarded her with questions which to Susan came with the rapidity of rain upon the roof.
"So James went along?"
"In his capacity of butler only."
Norton smiled. "Well, I'll take a jaunt out there myself. You are sure of the location?"
"Yes."
"Well, good by. I'll go as a waiter, since they wouldn't invite me. I'm one of the best little waiters you ever heard of; and all things come to him who waits."
What a pleasant affable young man he was! thought Susan as she watched him jump into the car and go flying up the street.

Jones was a good deal surprised when Norton turned up at the old manor.
"What made you come here dressed like this?" the butler demanded.
"I'm a suspicious duffer; maybe that's the reason."
"Well, you know anything?"
"Well, no; I can't say that I do. But, hang it, I just had to come out here."
"Maybe it's just as well you did," said Jones moodily.
"I know this place. The housekeeper used to be my nurse, and she is still on the job she may be of service to us. You don't think they'll question or recognize me?"
"Hardly. I'll put in a word for you. I'll say I sent for you, not knowing if we had enough servants to take care of the luncheon."
"And now I'll go and hunt up Meg."
"Sure enough, his old nurse was still in charge of the house; and when her "baby" disclosed his identity she all but fell upon his neck.
"But what are you doing here, dressed up as a waiter?"
"It's a little secret, Meg. I wasn't invited, and the truth is I'm very desparately in love with the young lady in whose honor this coaching party is being given. And . . . maybe, she's in danger."

"Danger? What about?"
"The Lord only knows. But show me about the secret. I've not been here in so long I've forgotten the run of it. I remember one room with the secret panel and another with a painting that turned. Have they changed them?"
"No; it is just the same here as it used to be. Come along and I'll show you."
Norton inspected the room carefully, stowing away in his mind every detail. He might be worrying about nothing; but so many strange things had happened that it was better to be on the side of caution than on the side of carelessness. He left the house and ran across Jones carrying a basket of wine.

"Here, Norton; take this to the party. I want to reconnoiter."
"All right, Maud! Say Jones, how much do you think I'd earn at this job?" comically.
"Get along with you, Mr. Norton. It may be the time to laugh, and then it may not."
"I'm going back into the house and hid behind a secret panel. I've got my revolver. You go to the stable and take a try at my car; see if she works smoothly. We may have to do some hiking. Where is the countess in this?"
"Leave that to me, Mr. Norton," said the butler with his grim smile. "Be off, they are moving back toward the house."

So Norton carried the basket around to the lawn, where it was taken from his hands by the regular servant. He slithered as he saw Florence, laughing and chatting with a man who was a stranger and whom he heard addressed as count. Some friend of the countess, no doubt. Where was it this tangle going to end? He wished he knew. And what a yarn he was going to write some day! It would be read like one of Gaboriau's tales. He turned away to wander idly about the grounds, when beyond a clump of cedars he saw three or four men conversing lowly. He got as near as possible, for when three or four men put their heads together and whisper animatedly, it usually means a poker game or something worse. He caught a phrase or two as it came down the wind, and then he knew that the vague suspicions that had brought him out her had been set in motion by fate. He heard "Florence" and "the old drawing room"; and that was enough.

He scurried about for Jones. It was pure luck that he had had old Meg show him through the house, otherwise he would have forgotten all about the secret panel in the wall and the painting. Jones snatched resignedly. Were these men of the countess party? Norton couldn't say, and by he could hear the guest moving about in the room. Then all sounds ceased for a while. Norton strained his ear against the panel. A door closed sharply.
"No; here you must stay, young lady," said a man's voice.
"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the beloved voice.
"It means that no one will return to this room and that you will not be missed until it is too late."
The sound of voices stopped abruptly, and something like scuffling ensued. Later, Norton heard the back of a chair strike the panel and some one sat heavily upon it. He waited perhaps five minutes; then he gently slid back the panel. Florence sat bound and gagged under his very eyes! It was but the work of a moment to liberate her.

"It is I—Jim. Do not speak or make the least noise. Follow me." Greatly astonished, Florence obeyed, and the panel slipped back into place. The room behind the secret panel had barred windows. To Florence is appeared to be a real prison.
"How did you get here?" she asked breathlessly.

"Something told me to follow you. And something in me always going to tell me to follow you, Florence."
She pressed his hand. "It was to her as if one of those black heroes had stepped out of a book; only book heroes always had tremendous fortunes and did not have to work for a living. Oddly enough, she was not afraid."
"Who was the man?" he asked.
"The Count Norfield. Some one has imposed upon the countess."
"Do you think so?" with a strange look in his eyes.
"Nothing just now. The idea is to get out of here just as quickly as we can. See this painting? He touched a spot on the wall and the painting slowly swung out like a door. "Come, we make our escape to the side lawn from here."
At the stable they were confronted with the knowledge that Norton's

such coincidence in these two inventors men that she felt as if she was never going to be afraid any more.
When the Countess Olga saw the three horses it was an effort not to fly into a rage. But secretly she warned her people who presently gave chase in the limousine, while she practiced and teased and laughed with her company, who were quite unaware that a drama was being enacted right under their very noses. The countess, with the real of superiority, tore her handkerchief into shreds. There was something sinister in the way all their plans fell through at the very moment of consummation; and that night she determined to ask Braine to withdraw from the warfare, which gradually decimated their numbers without getting them anywhere toward the goal.
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